

“From the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water.” (29:10)

Everybody was present that day, from the woodcutter to the water carrier. Is this the correct sequence? Should it not be worded, “From your leadership all the way down to your woodchoppers” or “From your goldsmiths to your woodchoppers”? One would think that the woodchopper and water carrier are basically on an equal level. Shivim Panim LaTorah suggests the following idea: When the ax is raised up over the head of the woodchopper, the “ax” would never consider that it is higher or more distinguished than the woodchopper, because the woodchopper is the one who is raising it up. Likewise, when the pail is lowered into a well, would the water-drawer even for a moment think that he is on a higher plateau than the pail? After all, if he would not have lowered the pail, it would have been on the same elevation as he.

This analogy may be applied to our leadership. The leaders should never feel they are on a higher level than the people whom they serve, because without the people who selected them as their leaders, they would be no more distinguished than the common person. No leader should ever look down upon any person, because ultimately the leader is responsible for the development of the people he serves. If they do not ascend, it is because he is a poor leader. The leadership have an enormous responsibility. That is why they have been selected for this position. If the leaders fail in their charge, if they do not succeed in elevating their community both spiritually and morally, then, not only do they not deserve their position, they are actually depriving the community of their due. They should take a lesson from the woodcutter and water-drawer.

No Jew is unimportant. Every person has great value. The ability to value and appreciate each individual is the sign of a great person and one who truly deserves to be a leader. Horav Shmuel z.l., m'Lubavitch had among his many followers a wealthy diamond merchant by the name of Reb Monya Mosinson. One time, Reb Monya was sitting with a group of chassidim at the Rebbe's table and the conversation turned to the poverty which beleaguered the Russian Jewish community. Suddenly, in middle of the conversation, the Rebbe began to laud the poor Jewish workers who slaved from early morning until late at night in order to provide for their families. They preferred to be subject to the most difficult backbreaking labor, rather than live off communal offerings.

Reb Monya interjected, “I am surprised that the Rebbe is making such a to-do about these simple people.” “These people possess many valuable virtues” the Rebbe countered. “I do not see their qualities,” Reb Monya responded, as he motioned with his hand in a condescending and derogatory manner.

The Rebbe did not reply to this disparaging remark. The next morning the Rebbe asked Reb Monya if he had brought a collection of diamonds with him. Reb Monya immediately proceeded to take out his bag of diamonds and spread them out on the table. He was so excited about his wares that he began to point out the exceptional qualities of each individual diamond. “I see nothing

special about these diamonds,” the Rebbe said in a mocking manner. “Rebbe!” Reb Monya exclaimed in a slightly higher voice, “One must be a maven, proficient and adept in the value of diamonds, before he can pass judgment on these stones. Diamonds are remarkable stones whose individual beauty and value one must learn to appreciate.” Upon hearing this, the Rebbe looked at Reb Many. With a stern accusing tone, he reminded the diamond merchant of the conversation they had had the previous day, “This same idea applies to every Jew. Each and every Jew has inestimable value. Only it takes a maven to recognize this.”